



Some Libyan women have been recruited for military service, although the rate of female participation is low. Shown: a parade in Tripoli



EGYPT-LIBYA

The cease-fire continues to hold along the Egyptian-Libyan border, and there has been no significant military activity there this week. Efforts by Palestinian and Kuwaiti mediators to arrange a truce and schedule a meeting between the Egyptian and Libyan foreign ministers have apparently stalled, however, and the two sides are continuing propaganda attacks.

The recent border clashes are likely to accelerate Libyan President Qadhafi's plans both to reduce the large Egyptian presence in Libya and to expand the Libyan military establishment. About 20,000 Egyptian workers have already left Libya on their own, and others in sensitive government and military jobs were expelled.

The expulsion of the remaining Egyptian labor force in Libya—more than 200,000 Egyptian workers who form the backbone of Libya's professional, governmental, and skilled construction workforce—would worsen an already tight labor situation and threaten Libya's economic development program. Egyp-

tians fill many technical and specialized jobs and have been involved in preparing the national budget, statistics, and planning.

Manpower shortages were becoming a serious constraint on Libyan development plans even before the military situation escalated. Investment spending under the five-year plan for 1976-1980 has been running 20 percent behind schedule, in large part because of shortages of skilled labor and management personnel.

Libya's population of only 2.5 million cannot man the many ambitious industrial, construction, and oil-related projects programmed in the five-year plan. Labor shortages are compounded by a high illiteracy rate, low rates of female participation, and a general Libyan disdain for labor associated with urban rather than pastoral life. Foreigners make up more than a third of Libya's 900,000-man workforce.

Egyptian workers—especially construction workers, whose skills are in short supply throughout the Middle East—would be difficult to replace. Turks, Pakistanis, and Europeans, often mentioned as possible replacements for Egyptians, generally lack a command of Arabic, a necessity in Libya. Workers in neighboring North African countries generally do not have the skills Libya requires.